

Bridgewater Pays Tribute To Veterans With Monument

By JERRY WEIL
Correspondent

BRIDGEWATER — Two hundred people were on hand Saturday to witness the realization of a dream as a monument honoring Bridgewater's World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam veterans was dedicated.

An inscription on the monument reads: "A dream comes true...", referring to the vision of the late Earl Wilson, post commander of the Bridgewater chapter of the American Legion for 10 years whose dream became reality when the monument was unveiled.

"My father is here with us in spirit today," said Jeffrey Thomas. He told the gathering that his father would be proud of all the citizens of Bridgewater who worked together to make the monument possible. Elsie Thomas, the widow of Earl and mother of Jeffrey was presented with a bouquet of roses by Andy Blanchard who served as chairman of the memorial committee.

The unveiling ceremony began with the singing of the national anthem by Kathy Carroll. The monument was unveiled by Lindsay Williams, a sixth grade student at the Bridgewater Elementary School who had written the following inscription on the monument:

"I know who you are
I know where you were
I what you did
But I don't know
The pain you went through"

After the unveiling, a Vermont National Guard rifle squad fired three times in tribute to the 300 Bridgewater veterans whose names are inscribed on the monument. Then taps were played.

Earlier in the program, Bridgewater Selectman Nelson Lee read letters addressed to the gathering from Gov. Howard Dean and U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). Sanders' letter called for honoring "the real contract" that the nation has with those who risked their lives for it.

U.S. Sen. James Jeffords (R-Vt.) had been scheduled to speak, but

canceled due to a death in his family. His speech was read by Marie Brown, an aide to the senator.

Brigadier Gen. Tom O'Donovan spoke on behalf of the Vermont National Guard and introduced the soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 172nd Armor and Norwich University ROTC students who composed the rifle squad and the color guard.

Fund-raising for the monument began in March, according to committee chairman Andy Blanchard. Blanchard reported that his committee had raised more than \$20,000, almost entirely through local donations and fund-raising events. The cost of the monument was \$19,500. The committee intends to use the surplus money for college scholarships for children of Bridgewater veterans.

Jeffrey Thomas expressed amazement and gratitude that such amount could be raised so quickly in a slow economic time.

"It's awesome and wonderful for my family," he said.

On the back of the monument a tribute is inscribed to the three people most responsible for the realization of the monument: Andy Blanchard, his wife, Lisa, and town clerk Cheryl Phelps.



Photo by Rick Russell

Kori Young of Bridgewater takes a rubbing of her father's and grandfather's name following the dedication of the town's veterans memorial.

Vermont Honors Sons Killed In Vietnam

By WILSON RING 1990
Associated Press

COLCHESTER, Vt. — Elderly mothers in wheelchairs and children too young to remember their fathers gathered at Camp Johnson in Colchester on Saturday to honor their relatives killed in the Vietnam War.

For some it was another occasion to honor their loss, but for others it was an occasion to revisit the grief that the decades have covered, but not cured.

Some beamed with pride as they were escorted to the podium where they received the Vermont Patriot medal from Vermont's top dignitaries, a few looked uncomfortable with the attention; a few sobbed openly.

"It's been 28 years," said Jeanne Haner whose husband Sanford R. Gaboriault of Franklin was killed in action on May 6, 1968. "It gives

*"We put our lives on
hold.... That's how we
lived from '64 to '72."*

— Donald Cook,
Marine colonel

you a sense of meaning."

One of Gaboriault's sons was there as well. He hadn't been born when his father died.

It is believed that 109 Vermonters died in Vietnam.

Vietnam veterans were at the outdoor ceremony at the headquarters of the Vermont National Guard. Many wore the well-worn fatigues with the black missing-in-action patches that have come to typify the search for answers by a country still trying to find meaning in the sacrifices of Southeast Asia.

Veterans of earlier wars were there as well as current members of the National Guard and active duty service members.

Vermont's entire congressional was there as was Gov. Howard Dean, whose brother is still listed as missing in action from the Vietnam War.

"I think I understand the pain," Dean said. "It's been 30 years and the pain never goes away."

While the ceremony was about sacrifice, honor and loss, the controversy that has plagued U.S. involvement in Vietnam was also present.

Robert Graeter of Enosburg Falls is still fighting his own Vietnam war while he tries to get the Veterans Administration to recognize that the ailment that has completely disabled him stemmed from his exposure to agent orange, a powerful defoliant used to clear vegetation, during his Navy service in 1966.

He sat next to Gary Greeno of St. Albans, the head of the local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America. Greeno's cousin, Reginald Begnoche, a door gunner in a helicopter was killed in action on Sept. 4, 1969 when he was shot down.

Begnoche was honored at the ceremony.

The 1966 Vermont Legislature authorized the presentation of the Patriot medals, but through some oversight it was forgotten until Saturday. Vermont National Guard officials say no similar medal has been presented in any other state.

U.S. Marine Col. Donald Cook is probably Vermont's most well-known Vietnam casualty. An advisor to South Vietnamese forces, he was captured on Dec. 31, 1964.

He supposedly died in captivity three years later. He gave his food and medicine to other American prisoners. In 1980 he was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

His son W. Thomas Cook, 33, of Charlotte is the only one of Cook's relatives left in Vermont. He laid a wreath at the guard's flagpole.

"We put our lives on hold," Cook said before the ceremony. "That's how we lived from '64 to '72."

The U.S. Navy is naming a ship after Cook. The commander of the Donald Cook was also at the ceremony.

RUTLAND



HERALD

Vol. 136-No. 201
Rutland, Vermont ♦ Copyright **R**

Wednesday Morning, August 21, 1996

50¢ ...
2 Sections ♦ 24 Pages

Fair Haven Park Vigil Presses Government on MIAs/POWs

By **ALAN J. KEAYS**
Herald Staff

FAIR HAVEN — A couple of years ago the driver of a car with New Hampshire license plates circled Veterans Memorial Park in Fair Haven several times before finally coming to a stop.

The driver did not get out of the vehicle, instead stared through an open window at a group of people in the park holding black flags with white lettering that read, "POW/MIA, Gone But Not Forgotten."

Donald Amorosi, a former resident of Fair Haven who now calls South Glen Falls, N.Y., home, was a member of that group in the

park. An inquisitive Amorosi went over to the car's driver and introduced himself.

"He said he ~~was~~ in town working for a couple of weeks," Amorosi recalled the driver saying. "Then the driver struggled and he said, 'Thank you, my brother is missing in Vietnam.'"^{1A}

Amorosi said he was so moved by the emotions displayed by the driver of the car, tears welled up in his eyes.

"I was so dumbfounded; I don't know if I make much sense anyway, but I certainly didn't make any ~~sense~~ after that," Amorosi said.

This month marks the fourth anniver-

sary of a vigil held every Thursday at 7 p.m. in Veterans Memorial Park for all American military personnel who are prisoners of war or missing in action in foreign countries, Amorosi said.

It's a vigil that has endured snowstorms, drenching rain, hot temperatures and pesky mosquitoes.

Over the years, members of the group have built up story after story of getting their message across, one person at a time.

There are cars that honk horns and drivers who wave at the flag holders in the park.

(See Page 11: Veterans)



Staff Photo by Alan J. Keays

Donald Amorosi, Joseph Donaldson and Jerry Sauerbrei (left to right) maintain vigil on a recent Thursday in Veterans Memorial Park in Fair Haven. The vigil has been a weekly event for the past four years.

Veterans

Continued from Page One

There are the stray, curious passersby who stop in and ask why people are holding these dark flags in the park. There also are others who come from as far away as South Carolina to join them in their vigil.

One memorable Thursday night, Berlin, N.H., native Michael Durant, a former U.S. Army pilot shot down over Somalia and held in captivity 11 days in 1993, attended the vigil, Amorosi said.

"We had quite a crowd that night; there must have been a few hundred people here," he said. "The American Legion band could've marched through that night and I wouldn't have noticed, it was so crowded here."

For Fair Haven resident Joseph Donaldson, who has attended the vigil every Thursday night for the past couple of years, equally as memorable was the time a local Boy Scout troop stopped by to ask some questions.

"We answered as many of their questions as we possibly could," he said. "A week later we got thank-you notes."

Donaldson said in one of the notes, a mother wrote that her son was learning about the Vietnam War in school and was able to share some of the information he had learned from his evening at the park.

"The thank you notes were great, but to think he listened to us, that's very gratifying," Donaldson said. "Here's this little guy who knew what POW/MIA stood for; there are a lot of adults who don't even know."

For Donaldson and Amorosi this is not just about POW/MIAs from the Vietnam War, but for those unaccounted for in all foreign conflicts the United States has entered.

"A lot of people are focusing on the Vietnam veterans, but we have people from Korea and War World

II, who come stand in the vigil, all looking to have the government come clean," Donaldson said. "We're not satisfied with their answers that they give us about the remainder of the POWs and MIAs, not just in Vietnam, but from World War I all the way through."

According to Donaldson the vigil was started by Fair Haven resident Robert Jones in 1992. Jones has since moved to Meredith, N.H. Donaldson and Amorosi said they learned about the vigil through their local American Legions and by driving by the park.

"Initially this was a silent vigil," Donaldson said. He said members of the group would hold the POW/MIA flag in the park and stand silent a minute for each year since Vietnam War peace agreements were signed in 1973. Now, members of the group are no longer silent.

"It dawned on us that that was a horrible waste of an opportunity, and we decided we would discuss the POW issue with those who stopped in," Amorosi said. "But we limit our discussion to the POW/MIA issue."

This year, every Thursday night the vigil lasts 23 minutes. During that time members of the group share information, pass pamphlets around and wave at drivers honking horns.

"Certainly I don't think that any one of us intends to be here every Thursday night for the rest of our lives," Donaldson said. "We would like to think that our government could come to some terms with us and do the right thing and be honest."

"These are lost brothers and sisters and they deserve the right to be able to come home if not alive then brought to their resting peace here at home so their families could have some closure," Amorosi added.

According to Amorosi, there are six POW/MIAs from the Vietnam War from Vermont and 138 from New York. There is a total of approximately 2,100 U.S. soldiers still unaccounted in Vietnam. One hundred thousand U.S. military service personnel are unaccounted for in foreign countries since World War I, he said.

"If I were on the other side of the fence, I would be hoping and praying that people hadn't given up on me," Amorosi said.

On a recent Thursday the turnout for the vigil was light, only Amorosi and Donaldson, accompanied by their wives. Later in the evening Jerry Sauerbrei, a resident of South Carolina who spends his summers in Fair Haven, stopped in to show his support.

A retired U.S. Air Force colonel who served in the military for 30 years, Sauerbrei said he made every attempt he could to attend the vigil when he was in Fair Haven.

"It's an issue that needs to be remembered," he said. "If people don't, a lot of people are going to be forgotten, and we don't want to forget."

Even though Amorosi doesn't believe the U.S. government is being honest about the POW/MIA issue, he still believes this is the best country in the world.

"If I thought this country was in jeopardy I'd put my life on the line tomorrow morning," said Amorosi, who served in U.S. Navy from 1963 to 1969. "But I think they have an obligation to me, to you and to our families that when people are committed they be returned, and at this point that's not happening."

"And we're going to keep coming here on Thursdays until that happens, even if we have to crawl," Donaldson added.



Staff Photo by Chuck Clarino

Jon Pintello (right) of Castleton and friend John Leonti of Canton, Ohio, are reunited nearly 30 years after they served in the Vietnam War. When he left Vietnam in 1968, Leonti was told Pintello had been killed, and he didn't learn the truth for 14 years.

Buddies Repairing The Bonds of War

Date ~~1997~~ 8-26-96

By YVONNE DALEY
Herald Staff

Imagine an old friend calling your mother to find out if you're really alive. That's what happened to Jon Pintello, a Castleton insurance agent, 14 years after he left Vietnam.

"I left Vietnam July 19, 1968," Pintello's good friend and fellow Vietnam veteran John Leonti recalled Sunday. "I was told Jon had been killed and another friend wounded. I went home believing that. All those years, I walked around thinking Jon was dead."

In 1982, Leonti visited the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, where he was filled with despair upon seeing the names of 51,000-plus soldiers who had died. It was what Leonti didn't find on the wall, however, that gave him hope: Pintello's name was not listed.

"I called his mother that Thanksgiving," Leonti recalled. "That night Jon called me and I learned

"All those years, I walked around thinking Jon was dead."

John Leonti

my good friend was very much alive and kicking in Vermont."

Leonti and his wife, Linda, travelled from Canton, Ohio, where Leonti is a machinist, to Castleton this weekend to continue the conversation that began Thanksgiving evening 1982.

In the nearly 30 years since the war, the two men have had their individual difficulties coping with the consequences of their tour of duty in Vietnam. For both, the most remarkable thing has been the consequence of finding one another again and the comfort that has

(See Page 10: Pintello)

Pintello

Continued from Page One

brought during some of their most difficult moments.

When Leonti called Pintello, Pintello was still well into his denial. To this day, many of Pintello's friends and associates remain unaware that he fought in Vietnam as a member of the Army's Fifth Cavalry.

"It was one year of my life, but it had an incredible effect on everything about me. I still have a hard time talking about it," Pintello said Sunday.

Pintello, a Bellows Falls native, had received shrapnel wounds in the incident in which Leonti thought he had died. The wounds weren't bad enough to keep him from finishing his tour of duty, a time in which he saw too much killing and questioned the beliefs that had led him to join the Army in the first place.

After the phone call from Leonti, the two men met in Washington at the dedication of the Vietnam veteran statue in 1984.

Until then, Pintello had done his best to think and talk as little as

possible about Vietnam. But with the meeting, the memories began to come back. Leonti helped him reconstruct memories he had submerged.

"He remembers everything," Pintello said.

Two years ago, Pintello joined the Rutland Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America.

"He was instrumental in my joining the VVA. John's helped me come to terms with that part of my past," Pintello said. "Well, come to terms isn't exactly the right phrase because you can never come to terms with it."

"I joined the VVA mostly because I realized there are a lot of veterans from the war with problems still who are falling through the cracks."

He has been active in an effort to refurbish a run-down house in Rutland that will serve as a safe house for homeless veterans. The house was named for Michael Dodge, a Woodstock veteran who took his life in the early 1980s.

For Leonti, the first time he saw the Vietnam memorial wall was an

emotional experience. "A lot of the anger came out. All I could see was the waste. Seeing all those names, all my frustration came out," he said.

Leonti said he went through several bad years after visiting the monument. When he talks of his tour of duty, the sacrifices he saw young Americans make and the final outcome of the war, he uses words like "useless," "stupidity" and "futile."

Reconnecting with Pintello provided a bright spot. There was someone he could talk to about experiences now several decades old, someone he wouldn't have to explain things to, someone who understood.

The two plan a reunion with their lieutenant later this year.

"It was a sad episode in a lot of people's lives," Pintello said as he and his friend flipped through the photographs of themselves as young men in uniform Sunday.

"Something good has come out of it, however," Pintello said. "Lifelong friendship."

RUTLAND



Vol. 136-No. 109
Rutland, Vermont ♦ Cop,

Monday Morning, M

CAR-RT SORT
40 10/18/96 10/18/96
VERMONT JOB SERVICE
25 MAIN ST
SPRINGFIELD
VT 05156



Staff Photos by L.B. Carp

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter No. 1 of Rutland (above) marches during Rutland's 33rd annual Loyalty Day Parade on Sunday. The Cycling Murrays (right) perform unicycle tricks, and honorary grand marshal Iva Mae Decker, 104, of Rutland waves to the crowd.

Loyal Beat

With 117 Units, Annual Parade Is A Long and Patriotic Affair

By KEVIN O'CONNOR
Herald Staff

Three stray Shrine snowmobiles rumbled past the reviewing stand almost two hours into Rutland's Loyalty Day Parade Sunday, about 30 minutes after the rest of their small-engine counterparts.

"Haven't these guys been through here once already?" asked master of ceremonies Ted Pendleton, echoing spectators

Leonard Wing saved their soles by reporting directly to the reviewing stand. The likes of Dean and city Mayor Jeffrey Wennberg joined them later, only to spend a good deal of time with their backs to the march surveying the empty building that soon will house Wal-Mart.

A good-sized crowd perched on curbs, lawn chairs, truck cabs and parents' shoulders.

"The best year we've ever had!" said Terry Zullo, calling

RUTLAND

Copyright

VOL. 20 NO. 41 USPS 305-103

Rutland, Vt.



Photo by Bill Brown

John Bergeron, head of Vermont's Vietnam Veterans of America, stands beside the unfinished statue that was missing for 12 years.

Herald 7-16-95

An Unfinished Statue Helps Vietnam Vets Reestablish Old Ties

By YVONNE DUMLEY
Staff Writer

Fifteen years ago, a group of Vermonters who were upset with their treatment by the government, the public and traditional veterans organizations, became the first chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America.

"We felt that the other veterans organizations didn't want us," said member Don Bessette at the time.

Bessette hoped the organization would draw attention to post-traumatic stress syndrome and to other ailments troubling veterans, such as the health problems caused by Agent Orange. VVA is a national organization, but it launched VVA 1 as the first chapter because of the early interest in this state.

One early veteran to seek VVA help was John Reno, 35, of Fair Haven, who had struggled with alcohol and drug addiction, and depression.

After fellow veterans helped him dry out and offered their own form of counseling, Reno, an artist, expressed his gratitude by carving a

"We don't know what he had in mind, so we will create something that will keep his original work."

—John Bergeron

marble statue of a Vietnam veteran. He envisioned a realistic rendering of a body handicapped by war and a face marked by grief and anger.

Reno died Oct. 21, 1983 in a boating accident on the Hudson River after having only begun work on the statue. Later, fellow veterans looked for the marble slab he had been working on, but could not find it.

Last year, John Bergeron of Rutland became interim president of VVA 1. He joined in the search and found it earlier this year stored at a quarry not far from Reno's former home.

Bergeron arranged to have the marble moved to Elm Carving Studio, a West Rutland gallery and studio.

"We're inviting all the members of

See Page 6: Statue

Statue

(Continued from Page One)

the VVA to work on finishing the statue," Bergeron said last week. The organization is currently taking design ideas and hopes to have the art ready for display next Memorial Day.

They will leave the crude outline of a face begun by Reno.

"We don't know what he had in mind, so we will create something that will keep his original work. It will be a tribute to the Vietnam veteran and also a memorial to John Reno. It will be something we can all work on," Bergeron said.

Bergeron is one of a new group of Vietnam veterans involved in VVA 1.

Founding members of the organization such as Bodette of Clarendon, Roy "Jake" Jacobsen of West Rutland, and Mary and Albert Trombley, also of Clarendon, have taken a less active role in recent years.

"It simply was taking up too much of my time and money. That and too much heartache. I had to get out for myself and my family," says Bodette, 46, a grandfather of six.

"It was a sad period of my life. It's never behind you, but I had to try to give myself a little space from it day after day," said Bodette who has seen several early members of the organization die, including Michael Dodge, a musician who committed suicide.

"The government likes to talk about volunteerism and promote volunteers. But they don't make it easy

for you, and they're not there for you when you need help," he said.

Mary Trombley, a traffic control official with the Air Force who helped train Vietnamese and American pilots, said she and her veteran husband are no longer active in the VVA. "We kind of got burned out and had to take a break from it. You can only do something like that for so long," she said.

But Bergeron and others, such as Jon Pintello of Fair Haven, who wanted nothing to do with the organization 15 years ago, have taken leadership roles in the organization in recent years.

"I was suspicious of any group back then," said Pintello who joined the VVA less than a year ago and is the organization's treasurer. Fifteen years ago, Pintello resented the stereotyping of the Vietnam veteran and didn't want to dwell on his war experiences.

A long-time friend of Reno's, he was hard hit when the artist died and still resents what he considers an inadequate job of investigating the incident by state police in New York.

Reno, an experienced boater, was reported to have drowned while sailing with a friend from Vermont to Connecticut. His body was found eight days after the incident.

"But I finally got to a place where I could deal with my feelings. Now I'm in all the veterans organizations, and I feel they have really come to welcome the Vietnam veteran," Pintello said.

Bergeron said he was drawn to the organization when he saw the "Moving Wall," a replica of the Vietnam Memorial that was on display in Rutland in 1991. Bergeron went to Main Street Park to see the wall and found himself talking for hours with other veterans.

He joined VVA 1 shortly afterwards.

The organization had gone through several slow years and records were scattered in several members' homes. As interim president last year, Bergeron started consolidating records and found news articles about Reno.

Working on Reno's marble seemed like a good project for the group and a way to rekindle interest in the organization. The group has also been fund-raising to help other veterans in need.

As a result, the VVA 1 membership — which had dropped from about 300 in the 1970s to only 30 — is now up to 60.

Last week, Bergeron said Vietnam veterans have mixed feelings about President Clinton's decision to normalize relations with Vietnam.

"We've spent all these years with all these groups going over there looking for POWs and MIAs, all to no avail. Maybe a different approach will work," he said.

Bodette, still bitter about the war, said he felt the decision to normalize relationships with Hanoi was done for economic reasons.

"It's not so we can have better access to records or a better chance of finding MIAs; it's because there's money to be made over there," he said.

Despite bitterness, Bodette said he is happy that the VVA 1 will work to finish Reno's project.

"It's unfortunate that things like his death happened. He and Michael Dodge were two very different stories, but they had some things in common. Both were talented men who were destroyed by their experiences. Maybe something will come out of that still," he said.

8/12/96

Scanned by

Sunshine greets 1st Vietnam Veterans Day

ELIZABETH WILSON
STAFF WRITER

BENNINGTON — The first annual Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day was held on Saturday on the grounds of the Vermont Veterans Home.

The Legislature recently declared the second Saturday in August a day to recognize contributions made by the 19,000 Vermonters who served their country during the Vietnam era. The day-long gathering indicated that many people are anxious to participate in a day of healing.

Saturday's events included a wreath-laying ceremony, presentations by color guards from throughout the region, speeches by both by veterans-rights advocates and politicians, displays of wartime memorabilia, a live band, two helicopters, a slide show, and a number of vendors selling a variety of mementos, including patches, T-shirts, dog tags and refreshments.

This day was the result of efforts made by the newly formed Vermont State Council of Vermont Veterans of America (VVA), which was organized to bolster the work of the state's four chapters.

"The day is part of an effort reach Vietnam era veterans, whether they served overseas or



Elizabeth Wilson

Hand in hand, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Colvin, Mrs. Lana Frappala and Tom Mashen walk between the colorguards after participating in a wreath-laying ceremony Saturday to commemorate and to honor those who gave their lives in the service of their country during the Vietnam War.

not," according to John Miner, the state council president. "We want to let them know they have a place to go, to be one again."

Members of Vermont Thunder roared up in style on the backs of their Harley-Davidsons to show their support.

But Miner estimated that during the course of the day a cou-

See VETERANS Page 16

Jed Jones of North Bennington takes aim with a 30 caliber machine gun mounted on the side of a Huey helicopter. Two helicopters were on hand from Burlington as part of Vermont Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day Saturday.

and I am your blocker and we're going all the way," he said.

1st annual Vietnam Veterans Day held in Bennington

VETERANS from page 1

ple thousand people, in a quieter way, stopped to visit, to listen to speeches and music, and to give credit where it has been long overdue.

The resolution to designate a day for recognition of Vietnam veterans was first introduced in Montpelier by Sen. Dick Sears, D-Bennington, who said the idea received support from both liberals and conservatives in Montpelier.

But he expressed surprise when asked why Vietnam veterans would deserve a day of their own. "They never got the recognition or the thanks that other

veterans got," he said.

In addition to giving that recognition, advocates for veterans hope it will help protect and increase services available to veterans. "The day will also help heal the psychological wounds of veterans," said Tim Beebe, team leader at the veterans center in White River Junction.

"Hopefully, with days like this, we can get to the veterans who need these services," he said. "There no need for them to suffer in silence."

The issues confronting Vietnam veterans are what they have always been, Miner said: post traumatic stress disorder, Agent orange, homelessness.

But even as the message is be-

ing sent out, veterans face increasing funding cutbacks, a process that U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., described, to applause from the crowd, as "balancing the budget on the backs of veterans."

Retirement and medical benefits are threatened, V.A. hospitals are being closed and services cut, according to Sgt. James Sweet, president of Bennington's Chapter 601. Not only were these benefits promised to the soldiers, he said "after 20 years of active duty and reserve time you deserve the benefits."

The Veterans Affairs was first started in 1933 to correct the situation that veterans landed in after World War I. Homecoming

soldiers found they had to foot their own medical bills for injuries sustained during the war.

Now, according to Beebe, those cutbacks threaten to create the same situation all over again.

Vermont has long been in the leadership in matters regarding the recognition to veterans of the Vietnam war. The first Vietnam Veterans Center in the country was started in Williston, in 1979, and the founding chapter Vietnam Veterans of America originated in Rutland in 1980.

Although many veterans agree that a day of recognition has been a long time in coming, they also know that the peace-time battle for their due is not yet over.



Staff Photos by Vyto Starinkas

Vietnam veteran Bill Barnes (right) shakes hands with fellow vet Tom Skinner during a gathering Monday in Main Street Park, where a monument will be put up for veterans of the Vietnam War.

For Services Rendered

By LIZ ANDERSON
Herald Staff

In the clear, bright sunshine of a wintry Veterans Day morning, Andrew Moschetto nosed his sneaker into the dirt separating an asphalt path from the grass of Main Street Park in Rutland as he waited for the first of two different local observances to begin.

"Right here is where the walkway will be," he said.

Moschetto next pointed to the rear of an open, grassy space, indicating where a marble carving will commemorate fallen soldiers. He gestured wide to show where bushes will flank a sitting area with four benches.

Nearby, other Vietnam veterans unfurled flags for an impromptu kick-off ceremony marking plans for the memorial, which will be the first in the city dedicated solely to their honor.

John Bergeron, president of the Rutland chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America, arrived carrying a tape measure. "If I'm going to be here, I might as well do something," he joked.

Members have already met with several city officials and will lay out their plans in front of the Recreation Committee in a meeting Thursday. The group hopes to raise \$25,000 in the upcoming year and to set out the first stones in their monument by spring.

An hour later, at American Legion Post 31, close to 200 veterans and their families came together to honor the men and women who have served their country through the ages.

"We've got a nice crowd, good wea-



Left to right: Robert Brunelle, Len Doucette and Robert Dean, of the Marine Corps League Color Guard in Rutland, join in a prayer during American Legion ceremonies.

ther — what else could we ask for?" master of ceremonies Ken Shaw told the crowd as stars and stripes pennants fluttered from the ceiling.

Soon after, Shaw had his answer. Following a rousing number by the Rutland High School Band, he commented with a mischievous smile: "I wish there had been room and we could have marched around here — it would have been great!"

Father Reid Mayo of Christ the King Church gave the invocation, leading the group, "with words of thanksgiving on our lips and deep gratitude in our hearts."

Rutland Mayor Jeffrey Wennberg, in opening comments, warned his audience to be ever vigilant of threats to American security from abroad.

"Some of us believe the Soviet Union and the threat that superpower represented to the democracy of the world ... was brought down by the strength and commitment of American people and solid leadership," he said.

"... But the failure of that system ... does not make the world a safe place," he added. "In many ways it makes it a more dangerous place."

"The burden on us is greater than

simply checking the influence of the Soviet bear."

Guest speaker Joseph Corey, the state commander of the American Legion, urged the gathering to continue to press a number of issues into the national spotlight.

Veterans "deserve more than a day. Veterans deserve a dividend from a grateful nation," he said.

Corey promoted a "GI Bill of Health" that would open up veteran-oriented health care services to all past soldiers and their families, a constitutional amendment against burning the American flag and continued American pressure for information on prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action.

"If it means turning the economic screws on foreign governments, so be it," he said of the latter.

He also urged people to press for health care coverage for Gulf War veterans suffering from a variety of unexplained illnesses. "Whatever the reason, these men and women deserve health care and other benefits," he said. "We will not stand by for another Agent Orange cover-up."

From there it was on to the national anthem and quiet moments of reflection as the muffled sounds of a firing squad and trumpeters playing "Taps" filtered into the hall.

Rabbi Solomon Goldberg ended the gathering on a quieter, simple note.

"May our loving God turn his faith toward you and grant you peace," he prayed. "And so, too, may we turn our faces toward each other ... and be instruments of God's peace."



Staff Photo by L.B. Carp

System Vote

water source is only
llons a day, which
district dangerously
se of a major fire.

In addition Maciejewski said the Prudential Committee will send a mailing which will attempt to dispel some of the myths and rumors that have been floating around the town about the project.

Maciejewski also said she hopes to convince the roughly 300 voters who did not go to the polls last month or who have not attended public meetings on the issue to get involved this time around.

The three-member Prudential Committee is also hoping more fire district residents will complete a survey distributed earlier this summer. The surveys, which Maciejewski said are completely confidential, would establish the median household income for the fire district. If the income is low enough, the fire district would be eligible for \$600,000 in federal grant money. About 35 percent of the surveys have been returned, Maciejewski said, but approximately 65 percent must be completed for eligibility purposes.

Any future owner will have to address the need to preserve prime agricultural land. A group of people who thought might buy the entire training school.

Vietnam Veterans Plan City Park Memorial

By LIZ ANDERSON
Herald Staff

Rutland City officials and area Vietnam veterans will meet this week to discuss the veterans' proposal to install a memorial in Main Street Park.

The veterans envision a roughly 500-square-foot, partially enclosed garden and terrace that will function as a tribute to area residents who served in the Vietnam War and be a place for reflection for all who visit.

They expect to detail their ideas in a meeting Thursday with city Recreation and Parks Superintendent Leif Dahlin. Board of Aldermen President David Sugi is also expected to attend, according to John Bergeron, president of the local chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America.

"Certainly I'm supportive of the idea," said Dahlin, who said he planned to listen to the proposal and then "begin the research of how to go about doing it so we can put something in place that will be appropriate and visible."

"What I'll be doing is taking it from there and reporting to the Recreation Committee, which then will get it to the Board of Aldermen and the mayor and, of course, I'll just check on any restrictions, conditions, as to how we would proceed with this," Dahlin said.

Bergeron said several members of his group have met regularly throughout the summer to discuss ideas for the memorial, which is expected to include a three-ton marble carving begun a decade and a half ago by an area veteran who died before it was finished.

Early on, Bergeron said, the group's focus was on the piece of marble and what to do with it, a question that had them stumped.

"Then somebody said we should

have a place to go, to meditate, to reflect, and right away this mental block we had just evaporated," he said.

Bergeron said he and group member Andrew Moschetto quickly came back with similar designs.

Since then, he said, members have been soliciting estimates from area vendors and artisans to determine how much such an idea would cost. Bergeron said the estimates run anywhere from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

The current plan is to create an oblong brick terrace flanked on four corners with plantings and benches. Two sides would bear plaques listing the names of veterans killed in Vietnam or possibly all veterans who served in the conflict, and might possibly give facts about the war and the country of Vietnam.

On a third side would rest the marble carving, which Bergeron said a local sculptor has volunteered to complete with the full figure of a soldier.

In the center of the park, the veterans hope to have a bronze fountain in the shape of a "field cross" — a configuration of a bayonet, boots and helmet used to commemorate a fallen soldier.

Bergeron said the veterans' group plans to begin fund raising for the project once they have the final plans fleshed out and OK'd by the city.

Staff for Sens. Patrick Leahy and James Jeffords and Rep. Bernard Sanders are currently researching whether any grant money is available to help fund the memorial, Bergeron said. Several area artisans and merchants have also offered to donate their services or materials either for free or at cost, he said.

ay Specials

th wild mushroom sauce

hster in a Puff Pastry

VERMONT PET CENTRE

★ It's our BIG ★

LABOR DAY SALE